

defeated the Assyrians. He desecrated the tombs, insulted the monuments, and carried the bones away to Nineveh. It was believed that the ghosts of these dead heroes would suffer the captivity inflicted on their bones, and sacrifices were made to them just sufficient to prolong their existence and suffering.

This policy was pursued with all the ingenious refinements which the dogmas suggested, in order to glut the vengeance of the Assyrian king.¹ The Babylonians were peaceful and industrial, but the Persians combined with great luxury and licentiousness a fiendish ingenuity in torture and painful modes of execution. It is very interesting to notice in Homer criticism of conduct from the standpoint of taste and judgment as to what is seemly.²

Homer thought it unseemly for Achilles to drag the corpse of Hector behind his chariot. He says that the gods thought so too.³

He disapproved of the sacrifice of twelve Trojan youths on the pyre of Patroclus.⁴ In the poems there are recorded many unseemly acts. Achilles spurned the prayer of Hector that his body might be redeemed, and wished that he could eat part of the body of his conquered foe. The Greeks mutilated the corpse with their weapons.⁵

Agamemnon and Ajax Oileus cut off the heads of the slain.⁶ Odysseus ordered twelve maidens who had been friends

to the suitors to be put to the sword. Telemachus hanged them.

Melantheus, who had traitorously taken the suitors' side, was

mutilated alive, member by member.⁷ Odysseus tells Eurykleia

that it is a cruel sin to exult over a dead enemy, but the heroes

often did it. This doctrine expresses the better sense of the

age, but a doctrine which was beyond their self-control when

their passions were aroused. The Olympian

household must be
 taken to represent the society of the time, especially
 if we throw
 out the stories of the violations of the sex taboo
 which were
 often myths of nature processes or survivals of
 earlier mores.
 The Olympian gods show no dignity,
 magnanimity, or moral

¹ Maspero, *Peuples de V Orient*, III, 436-439.

² Professor Keller calls my attention to a number of words
 used by Homer to
 subject conduct to this test of seemliness. It seems to be
 for him the standard
 of right

⁶ *Ibid.*, XXII, 338.

* //., XXII, 395 ; XXIV, 51.
 102.

⁶ *Ibid.*, XI, 147; XIII,

4 *Ibid.*, XXIII, 164.

⁷ *Od.*, XXII, 441* 447.